

Letter from Taizé

n°244 Bimonthly 0,50 euro October – November 2005/ 5

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Brother Roger, Taizé 1915 – 2005

To all those who are with us in our sorrow:

On behalf of our Community of Taizé, I wish to thank all those who have supported us so much by their presence at the funeral, their messages, their prayers, in these days when we said farewell to our brother Roger. In our deep sorrow, we have felt so much warm affection; it was a consolation for our hearts.

Brother Roger opened a road and led us on that road with exceptional energy and courage, not just us brothers but all those who loved him. Some intimate convictions led him to go forward tirelessly on that road. I will mention just two of these convictions.

Often Brother Roger repeated these words: "God is united to every human being without exception." This confidence carried and will carry the ecumenical vocation of our little community. With the whole Church we want to believe this reality and to do everything to express it with our life. Brother Roger had all human beings in his heart, from every nation, in particular young people and children. We want to continue in his steps.

And the other conviction: Brother Roger constantly returned to that Gospel value which is kindheartedness. It is not an empty word, but a force able to transform the world, because, through it, God is at work. In the face of evil, kindheartedness is a vulnerable reality. But the life which Brother Roger gave is a pledge that God's peace will have the last word for each person on our earth.

Together we want to pray:

God of goodness, we entrust to your forgiveness Luminita Solcan who, in an act of sickness, put an end to the life of Brother Roger. With Christ on the cross we say to you: Father, forgive her, she does not know what she did.

Holy Spirit, we pray for the people of Romania and for the young Romanians whom we love so much in Taizé.

Christ of compassion, you enable us to be in communion with those who went before us, and who can remain so close to us. We entrust into your hands our brother Roger. Already he is contemplating the invisible. In his steps, you prepare us to welcome a ray of your brightness.

With each of you, in brotherly communion.
Brother Alois

From December 28th, 2005 to January 1st, 2006, tens of thousands of young adults from throughout Europe and elsewhere will be coming to the parishes and families that are preparing to welcome them in the greater Milan area.

To prepare for the Milan meeting, elements for a prayer are proposed on the website www.taize.fr To register for the meeting, you can also find practical information on the website and, for some countries, a list of local contacts or people organizing the journey.

28 December 2005
- 1 January 2006



Taizé
Milan

Among the Numerous Messages Received in Taizé

Pope Benedict XVI

General audience, Wednesday August 17th, 2005

This morning I received very sad, tragic news. During vespers yesterday afternoon, our beloved Frère Roger, founder of the Taizé Community, was stabbed and killed, probably by a mentally disturbed woman. This news has affected me even more because precisely yesterday I received a very moving, affectionate letter from Frère Roger. In it he wrote that from the depth of his heart he wanted to tell me that "we are in communion with you and with those who have gathered in Cologne." Then he wrote that, because of his state of health, unfortunately he would not be able to come personally to Cologne, but that he would be present spiritually with his brothers. At the end, he wrote in this letter that he hopes to come as soon as possible to Rome to meet with me and to tell me that "our Community of Taizé wants to go forward in communion with the Holy Father." Then he wrote by hand: "Holy Father, I assure you of my sentiments of profound communion. Frère Roger of Taizé."

At this moment of sadness, we can only commend to the Lord's goodness the soul of this faithful servant of his. We know that from sadness, as we just heard in the psalm, joy will be reborn. Frère Roger is in the hands of eternal goodness, of eternal love; he has attained eternal joy. He invites and exhorts us to be faithful labourers in the Lord's vineyard, even in sad situations, certain that the Lord accompanies us and gives us his joy.

Address to representatives of various Christian confessions in Cologne, Germany, Friday August 19th

I would also like in this context to remember the great pioneer of unity, Brother Roger, who was so tragically snatched from life. I had known him personally for a long time and had a cordial friendship with him. He often came to visit me and, as I already said in Rome on the day of his assassination, I received a letter from him that moved my heart, because in it he underlined his adherence to my path and announced to me that he wanted to come and see me. He is now visiting us and speaking to us from on high. I think that we must listen to him, from within we must listen to his spiritually lived ecumenism and allow ourselves to be led by his witness towards an interiorized and spiritualized ecumenism.

Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations

Following the finest traditions of the faith that sustained him, Brother Roger consecrated his life to the service of peace, dialogue and reconciliation. He became the untiring advocate of the values of respect, of tolerance and of solidarity, in particular toward the young. His message of hope and of trust will remain a source of inspiration for all. I am convinced that you will be able to

pursue the work begun by Brother Roger. All my best wishes go with you in this exalting mission.

Monastery of La Grande Chartreuse

The dramatic circumstances of his death are merely an external coating that serve to make yet clearer the vulnerability of Brother Roger that he cultivated as a doorway by which, preferably, God gains access to us. Fr. Marcellin Theeuwes, Minister General of the Carthusian Order

Dr. Rowan D. Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Very few people in a generation manage to change the whole climate of a religious culture; but Brother Roger did just this. He changed the terms of reference for ecumenism by the challenge to Christians of diverse loyalties to live the monastic life together; he changed the image of Christianity itself for countless young people; he changed the churches' perception of the absolute priority of reconciliation, first in postwar Europe, then throughout the globe. And what is perhaps most important is that he did this without any position of hierarchical authority, without any position within the politics and power-struggles of the institution. His authority was authentically monastic – the authority of a father and elder brother in God who drew his vision from patient waiting on the Lord in prayer, and from the work and study and discernment of a committed Community. His life and witness present the true Gospel challenge to all our Christian institutions, the challenge to become really credible through our willingness to live and listen in humility, to know where our true power lies. We thank God today for a life that questions our institutional complacency, not in the name of fashion or ease or naive radicalism, but simply in the name of the Gospel of Jesus and the ministry of reconciliation. Brother Roger's life will be a lasting gift and challenge, and we pray that the community of Taizé, so much loved and valued in all the Christian world and beyond, will go on offering us this same gift in the years ahead.

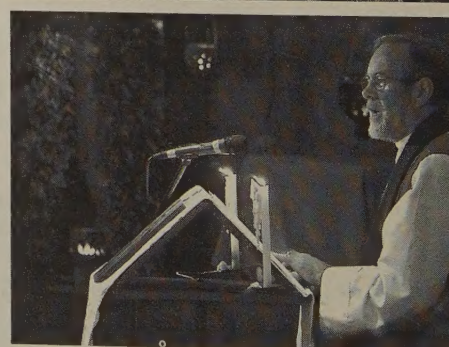
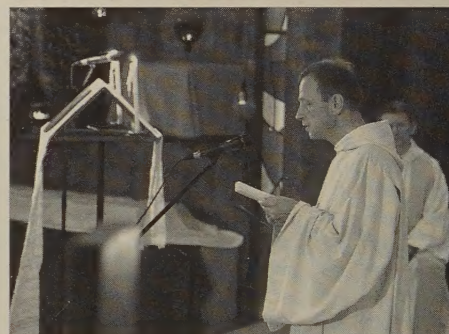
Victor, Romania

I have received the terrible news with great sadness in my heart. It is still difficult for me to admit that this is real. My life is different, is better because Brother Roger existed and I am sure it is the same for millions of people. It is like yesterday, the moment when I received the blessing from Brother Roger. Every time I remember that moment I still feel his fingers on my head. I cannot see a person standing there but a spot of light. It is useless to ask that question that every one of us has thought of: "Why?" That lost soul took him from us, but nothing can ever take him from our hearts. Brother Roger will

always be close to us, taking care of us like angels do.

Anca, Romania

"Holy Spirit, we pray for the people of Romania and for the young Romanians whom we love so much in Taizé" I know that these words are not empty; they are not just a voice

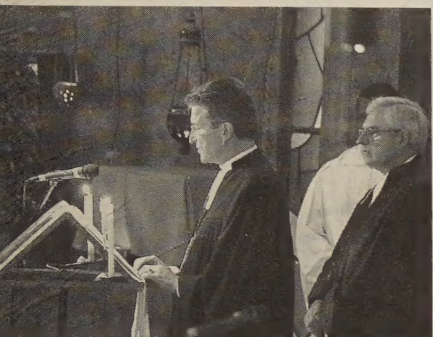


of hypocrisy. Although I read these words prayed by Brother Alois only today, eleven days after they were spoken, I still need to write to you.

Even if I never really saw Brother Roger, I dare say I knew him. You, all the brothers, were always speaking of him through the way you lived your daily lives. You bear the witness of Jesus Christ and of his beloved servant, Brother Roger. You have to keep going on this Way forever. You have to run forward, as the apostle Paul did. Never look back, but throw yourselves forward, tirelessly, and finally you will reach the end, in the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Wolfgang Huber, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Church of Germany

Meeting Brother Roger and experiencing the Taizé Community has marked the lives of many people. The possibility of personal



exchanges, and especially the community prayer, strengthened the personal faith of many Christians. The young adult European meetings have become for many a source of faith conviction and ecumenical understanding. This all became possible because in all things this prior of Taizé radiated reconciliation, consolation and a special trust. He remains an unparalleled reference-point and model for many people. It is especially terrible and incomprehensible that a man whose goal in life was peace, reconciliation and non-violence met his death through an act of violence. But his witness to peace and reconciliation, along with the depth of his personal faith, remain a heritage for the future.

Anne, France

To all the Community of Taizé. I want to say thank-you for the light that you are and that you were on Tuesday evening. For all of us you were messengers of peace. You showed us all how peace is possible, quite simply, humanly, if it finds its breath in God.

May each of those present at Taizé on the evening of August 16, when Brother Roger was murdered, dare to transmit to a few people round them how peace is possible. Thank you too for having so much believed in us. Each of us felt it and was able to find peace within. That evening, peace won. Thank you, Brother Roger. Thank you all. Thank you for my children. Thank you for all of us.

Isabelle Ott-Baechler, President of the Synod, Evangelical Reformed Church of the Canton of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

In these tragic circumstances, Brother Roger addresses his friends a last letter composed of flesh and blood, the letter of a man who lived his love of Christ to the very end and offered up his life for others.

From the children from Bosnia who stayed in Taizé during the war that ravaged their country

With a heavy heart, we are writing now from Croatia. In 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997 we were welcomed for visits in Taizé by the brothers of the Community. We brought back home with us only good experiences. We will never forget those years and we'll always carry Brother Roger in our hearts. We believe that we will meet again one day, in a place where there will be no room for hatred or for any kind of evil.

Zoran and Goran Zubak, Ivan and Marko Zubak, Ivan, Goran and Mario Jurakic

Levi, a Rabbi in Jerusalem

Dear Brothers at Taizé
I cry with you today!

When Elijah goes up to heaven in a fiery chariot, his disciple Elisha cries out - "*Avi Avi rechev Yisrael uparashav* - My father, my father, chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" (2 Kings 2:12.) Elisha cannot imagine who will drive Israel, who will guide Israel. In the next verse he himself picks up Elijah's mantle. At this moment we all feel orphaned. How can we comprehend the loss of Brother Roger? Who will guide us? Who will give us direction? We are called upon to be like Elisha. What a paradox - at the moment when we feel weak and alone - we have to be ready to pick up a piece of his mantle, to continue his legacy. I pray with you that we will all have the strength, wisdom, gentle-

ness, patience and faith to be worthy of being called disciples of Brother Roger. I wish I could be with you at this time - know that I am with you in prayer and thoughts.

Joan, a young Orthodox Christian from Albania

I lost a father, someone who was a father without many words, but a father of an embracing peace and love. He loved me and he showed it every time, sometime being very active, sometime very peaceful. His presence was one of the biggest blessings I have ever experienced. During these last years, when logically we would think he was not so active, he was the most. Just his presence has helped me enormously. He is for me one vivid example of the incarnation of Christ, of the incarnation of love and peace. I am so grateful that he allowed himself, from a young age, to be Christ-like. He finished his race, he got his medal, and he is with his beloved. He loved me on earth and he will continue on heaven. He was but love.

Words spoken during a prayer service in memory of Brother Roger held in Haute-Savoie (France)

One woman said: "I knew Taizé in the 1960s. I had gone to a place near there for an agricultural training program. I remember exchanges in the little church at Taizé. We listened to Brother Roger, we spoke simply among ourselves. There was a brother there who played the organ . . . I wasn't baptized then . . . One year after that visit, I asked to be baptized."

Some families came with their children. One ten-year-old girl spoke in front of everyone: "I think I was six when I went to Taizé for the first time. I was beside Brother Roger. He asked me my name. What touched me was the way the next day he still remembered it."

A mother of Hungarian origin, now living in Haute-Savoie, spoke of the significance of Taizé in supporting her childhood community in Budapest. She went on: "What impressed me deeply when I went to Taizé for the first time was the way we were no longer obliged to hide. We were able to pray, talk about God, right out in the open, with the feeling that we were recognized."

Some young people speak up spontaneously, anxious to hear what is going to become of "Taizé". Mylène, who had been present at the funeral on Tuesday, said: "You would have thought that on a day like that, everyone would have been busy with other things. But it wasn't so; the welcoming continued. We were welcomed with tea and spicy bread. We felt that we were welcome, that that moment wasn't 'reserved.' Welcoming, on and on. The brothers were available for each and everyone . . . Taizé 'goes on' (she paused). And that'll not be without us . . ."

Benjamin: "It's the only place where I've been made welcome just as I am. You can go there just as you are, with your rickety side too . . . I've come to see that even with that rickety side, Christ was talking to me . . ."

Kurt Beck, Minister-President of Rhineland-Pfalz, Germany

Those seeking help were never turned away by Brother Roger, and his understanding of the needs of people was limitless. The tiny village of Taizé brought the message of Brother Roger into the world. At first, his house in Taizé became a refuge for perse-

cutted Jews, and then soon afterwards he quite naturally welcomed the German prisoners of war from camps in the surrounding area. What a great spirit, and what an example of love for one's neighbour!

João Miguel Tavares, Portugal

(taken from the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper)
There are times when God closes his eyes for a moment and evil strikes, violent and brutal. That happened on Tuesday, when a woman killed Brother Roger. His life was entirely dedicated to God and to others. I had always imagined that he would depart on a winter's day almost without anyone noticing, under white sheets. He ended his life with his throat cut one summer evening in front of many children while praying. Death is never just, but this one was particularly unjust.

Taizé is a place where song turns into prayer. It is one of the rare places in the world where it seems obvious to believe in God. (...) The secret of welcoming so many people from throughout the world is a Christian message reduced to the essential, and thus able to bring together Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox with no distinctions. Taizé is a projection in space of the personal qualities of Brother Roger: ecumenical, simple, accessible, welcoming (...)

The way Brother Roger died forces us to look evil in the face and to doubt that God keeps watch over us. And yet, he built a magnificent community based on trust and he constantly told us not to be afraid, because God never abandons us. The mystery of the faith is rooted in this impossible contradiction. Brother Roger devoted his entire life to this impossible contradiction. Does God exist? I don't know. But what I do know is that few people have been worthy of his existence. Brother Roger deserves God to be present, in the place towards which we are in the habit of raising our eyes, his arms open to welcome him, moved, at the gates of paradise.

Corine, Nice, France

I was extremely moved by the tolerance, the message of forgiveness, the love and the extreme dignity of the funeral. (...) You are among the very rare people on earth who, in the midst of adversity, remain faithful to the ideas they preach. As a matter of fact, ordinary people, and I am one of them, are often very good at giving good advice or standing up for this or that value, but when they find themselves physically hurt or confronted with dramatic situations that affect them very closely, they give way to doubt, anger, sorrow, fear... You preach forgiveness and are capable of living it out, granting it in such violent circumstances as Brother Roger's death. You believe in the love of God, in love between human beings, in trust: the intensity of your faith is a great help to me and, thanks to you, I grow.

Jasmina and Jovana, Pancevo, Serbia

For many years, Brother Roger proved that people of different cultures and convictions could live together without conflicts, and that young people are the ones who have the greatest influence to live peace truly.

Gosia and Marek, Poland

When people ask us what has had an influence on us in our lives, we always talk about the Taizé Community. Our whole adult life

has been lived in a close relationship with the community. We have the community to thank for the way we see things, the choices we have made in life, even for the way we are bringing up our children. Brother Roger, not personally, but through the community he created, has formed us for life, and now, a little already, our children.

Dimitra Doukoura, theology professor, Thessalonica, Greece

Christ is risen! From now on, your community is privileged by the prayers of a holy man who rests close to the throne of grace of Our Lord. We were very shocked. May God bless your witness to the authentic life of the Gospel. Eternal memory! Christ is risen!

Msgr. Loris Capovilla, former private secretary to Pope John XXIII

A man and a Christian, called like the patriarchs of old to cross the roads of the wide world with the lamp of hope; esteemed and loved by recent Popes; followed by hosts of young people who read in his eyes the splendour of the Eternal. He departed like Gandhi, while he was praying with young people. With his blood he consecrated the sacred edifice and witnessed to forgiveness and love. (...) Now we are all poorer and at the same time more determined to cultivate the seeds of holiness and brotherhood planted by him in the furrows of history.

Matthieu, France

In these hours of deep turmoil, I felt that I absolutely had to write to you to express my compassion. Yesterday morning I learned of the violent, unexpected death of Brother Roger. Certainly I know him no better than all the other young people who have been lucky enough to visit Taizé, yet the news of his death has touched me deeply. After all, I owe him a huge amount. It was three years ago, when I was 15, that I had the good fortune to go to Taizé for the first time. I've been back twice since. During those three visits, thanks to the singing, the quiet, peaceful atmosphere, I discovered God, the Love he bears us, his capacity to forgive us tirelessly. I have finally learned to live in peace with myself and with God. Without Taizé, I don't know if I would have encountered this God almighty in Love who matters so much to me today. So I want to give thanks to God for Brother Roger and the work he undertook. Despite the brutal way he died, I find a consolation in my conviction that up there a place had been prepared for him equal to all the good he was able to do here.

Stephanos, Metropolitan of Tallinn and of all Estonia, Orthodox Church of Estonia

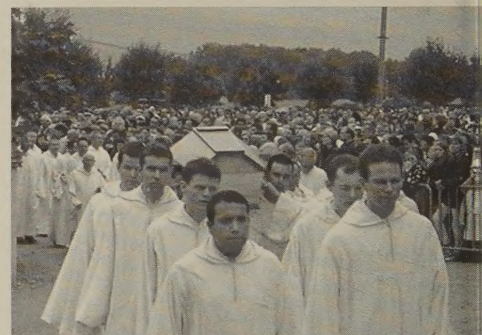
When I came in mission to Estonia after the terrible years of communism, I understood what Brother Roger meant by the "power of the provisional," that leaves all the room to God and God alone. I shall ever be grateful to him for that. He was called Roger and his name, everywhere it was pronounced, sang the consoling tenderness and freshness of God for all who were in pain and suffering. Thank you, Brother Roger, for your evangelical goodness; thank you, authentic apostle of your Lord and Master, the Christ.

Jean-Arnold de Clermont, President of the Protestant Federation of France

We pray for our brothers and tell them our trust that they will continue the work of their founder.

Frank T. Griswold, Presiding Bishop and Primate, Episcopal Church, USA

Having first visited Taizé more than forty years ago as a student, I am profoundly distressed by Brother Roger's death. Some years ago Brother Roger inscribed the sign of the Cross in the palm of my hand, urging me to remain young in heart; may his youthful spirit and unwavering hope, rooted so deeply in Christ, be his continuing legacy.



NOVEMBER

DAILY READINGS

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

6 SUN ^{Mt 25:1-13} Jesus said: Keep watch, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

7 Mon ^{Mt 7:7-11} Jesus said: Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

8 Tue ^{2 Th 3:1-5} May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

9 Wed ^{Is 65:17-18} The Lord says: See, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth. Be filled with rejoicing for ever, for I am creating my people to be gladness.

10 Thu ^{Mt 7:7-14} Jesus said: Enter by the narrow gate, for the road that leads to life is narrow.

11 Fri ^{Lk 12:22-31} Jesus said: Seek first God's Kingdom, and all other things will be given to you as well.

12 Sat ^{Is 50:4-9} God wakens my ear every morning to listen as a disciple.

13 SUN ^{Mt 25:14-30} In a parable, the master said to his faithful servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a little, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share your master's happiness!"

14 Mon ^{Jn 1:1-18} Of Christ, John writes: The light shines in the darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.

15 Tue ^{Rm 8:5-11} Paul writes: The Spirit seeks life and peace.

16 Wed ^{Ps 143} I think of all your deeds, Lord, and stretch out my hands to you; my soul is thirsting for you like a parched land.

17 Thu ^{1 K 19:1-8} When Elijah was discouraged, an angel of God touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and, strengthened by that food, he walked until he reached the mountain of God.

18 Fri ^{Gn 28:10-22} The Lord says: I am with you, I will watch over you wherever you go. I will not abandon you before accomplishing what I have promised you.

19 Sat ^{Mt 10:37-42} Jesus told those he sent out: Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

20 SUN ^{Mt 25:31-40} Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

21 Mon ^{Lm 3:22-26} God's compassion is renewed every morning; his faithfulness is great. It is good to await in silence the salvation of the Lord.

22 Tue ^{Jn 15:18-27} Jesus said to his disciples, "My choice of you has drawn you out of the world. Remember: No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they kept my word, they will keep yours as well."

23 Wed ^{Ga 2:15-21} Paul writes: The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

24 Thu ^{1 Tm 4:7-10} Paul writes: The point of all our toiling and battling is that we have put our trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all people.

25 Fri ^{Ga 6:1-10} The one who sows in the Spirit, will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

26 Sat ^{2 Th 3:1-5} God is faithful, he will give you strength and protect you from the evil one.

27 SUN ADVENT ^{Mk 13:33-37} Jesus said: What I am saying to you I say to all: Stay awake!

28 Mon ^{Mt 21:18-22} Jesus said: If you have faith, everything you ask for in prayer, you will receive.

29 Tue ^{Is 32:15-20} Isaiah said: Once again the Lord will breathe upon us, the wilderness will become as green as the forest and my people will abide in peace.

30 Wed ^{Mt 4:18-22} **St ANDREW** Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Jesus our hope,
even if we are
fragile, we would
like to follow you
on the road that
leads us to love in
the same way that
you love us.

Holy Spirit,
you are in
communion with
each of us, not just
for a moment but
for ever, right on
into the life which
never ends.

4 SUN As it is written in the book of Isaiah, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight", John the Baptist was in the desert announcing a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

5 Mon Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

6 Tue Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

7 Wed Jesus said: First take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly in order to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

8 Thu God chose us in Christ, before the world was made, to be holy and faultless before him in love.

9 Fri Moses told the people: What I command you today is not too difficult for you nor beyond your reach. The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

10 Sat Paul writes: In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

1 Thu The Lord says: My justice will become a light to the nations. My salvation is on the way and all peoples will put their hope in me.

2 Fri Live your lives in Christ Jesus. Be rooted and built up in him, strengthened by the faith you have been taught and overflowing with thankfulness.

3 Sat Praised be God who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

11 SUN John said: I baptise with water; but standing among you — unknown to you — is the one who is coming after me.

12 Mon Jesus said to Pilate: For this I was born, and for this I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.

13 Tue Daniel prayed saying: Listen to the prayer of your servant. For we rely not on our good deeds but on your great mercy.

14 Wed Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

15 Thu Turn my heart towards your way, O God, and not to selfish gain. By your word give me life.

16 Fri Seek the Lord while he is near. Turn to our God, who pardons freely.

17 Sat The Lord says: As the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before they have watered the earth and made it fertile, so is it with the word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me before it has achieved its purpose.

18 SUN Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

19 Mon James writes: Be patient; do not lose heart, for the Lord's coming will be soon.

20 Tue May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may you be rooted and established in love, so that knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

21 Wed John the Baptist said to the people: Anyone who has two tunics must share with whoever has none. And anyone with something to eat must do the same.

22 Thu Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

23 Fri Shout for joy, you heavens; earth exult! For the Lord is consoling his people and having compassion on his afflicted ones.

24 Sat The Lord says to his people: Look and see the joy that is coming to you from God.

25 SUN CHRISTMAS
The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

26 Mon ST STEPHEN
Jesus said: When you are handed over, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. What you are to say will be given to you when the time comes, for it is not you who will be speaking but the Spirit of your Father who will be speaking in you.

27 Tue ST JOHN
God has let us know the mystery of his good purpose: to bring all things together under Christ as head.

28 Wed The Lord has revealed his holy arm before all peoples. All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

29 Thu Paul writes: When you give, give generously, from the heart; when you do works of mercy, do so with joy.

30 Fri Life itself became visible, we saw it and testify to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was revealed to us.

31 Sat Do not model yourselves on the pattern of this world, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern the will of God.

DECEMBER

DAILY READINGS

The importance of this long chapter cannot be underestimated. Peter visits the home of a pagan and even shares a meal with him, at the risk of being excluded as unclean by contagion!

In order to allow the Good News to reach the ends of the earth, the first Christians did not invent a strategy. Rather, they let themselves be led by events, convinced that God is at work in history. Persecution scattered them into Samaria, and that led them already to proclaim the Gospel in a foreign land.

But how could the centuries-old barrier between Jews and Gentiles be crossed? Christ opened the way: by his death, he made "one people out of the two, destroying the barrier that separated them" (Ephesians 2:14). Paul's entire life after his conversion was a passionate search for that unity. He was aware that he could go forward only with the other apostles, and not alone. That is why Peter's commitment was so important. If God granted visions to Peter, it was up to him to interpret them and to draw the consequences. And that is what he did: "I realize that in every nation, whoever worships God and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35).

Unity is never something that is achieved once and for all, but always a reality to live day by day, within our communities as well as with those who are not part of them. Rooted in the Gospel, we can communicate God's Word to others, but also recognize the action of God where we did not expect it, as Peter and his companions did by seeing the Holy Spirit at work in Cornelius's household. Then communion spreads out like that tree of which Jesus said that the roots grow and the branches open so that the birds of the air can find shelter in it (see Matthew 13:32).

- What barriers are Christians called to cross over today?
- How does being faithful to the demands of the Gospel foster openness to all people?
- What can we do so that the search for new ways in the Church does not endanger communion?

As elsewhere in the Gospels (Matthew 7:21), Jesus stresses the necessary link between how we think and speak, and the way we live our life. When our words are in harmony with the substance of our life, they take on a solidity which tells both the speaker and the listener of their truth. People experienced this with Jesus, and not only his friends (see John 7:46). On the other hand, rootless words which are not confirmed by the substance of our lives are misleading. Like a house without foundations, they give an impression of shelter which is false. They are worse than no words at all.

"Why do you not do...?" asks Jesus. It is not to the danger of laziness that this passage of the gospel primarily directs our attention. For the story Jesus tells does not contrast an active person with one who is inactive. Both of them build their house. The difference lies in the digging down deep. The search to discover, in prayer and reflection, a deeper foundation for our life is essential if we are to receive God's words and allow them to shape our action.

Why then would we shy away from such digging? The trouble with digging is that it doesn't look as if much has been achieved. We receive no quick visible results to show, either to others or to ourselves. Whereas a life built on sand can look successful. Others seem to think it's fine to build like that and so, we say to ourselves, does it actually help to dig? When we dug a few spadefuls there was only sand and soil, nothing solid. So why dig deeper and exhaust ourselves making a hole in which we may lose ourselves completely? "Dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock." There is the promise contained in this story. We dig in faith that, underneath all the shifting and contradictory desires within us, there really is a rock on which we can rest our lives. When we keep on reaching down to that rock, then our words and actions begin to resonate together.

- What discoveries have you made that are like places of rock on which you can build?
- What words have you heard from Christ and not yet acted upon?

Father Sebastien, St Martin de Ré, France

Taizé will remain for my whole life, in my vocation as a priest, an essential beacon. It was the place of my first silence... It was my encounter with God in that whisper of silence so gentle, so serene, so calm... I pray for you, my dear brothers, I pray with you on this day when we know that Brother Roger, with the Father, keeps loving us, keeps talking to the Lord about us. Today my tears fall; they are the "words" I do not know how to write. In all things peace of heart, serene joy.

Achille, Yaoundé, Cameroon

I came to know Brother Roger during the pilgrimages made by students from sub-Saharan Africa from the dioceses of Algeria, especially as president of the Christian students of the diocese of Algiers between 2001 and 2003. In these sad circumstances, my first thoughts go to the young Christians of the dioceses of Algeria who are accustomed to go to Taizé on pilgrimage (. . .) "One passes through Taizé as one passes close to a spring of water" – words spoken by someone we loved and will always go on loving, John Paul II. May we, those who have drunk and those who hope to drink from that spring, make memory of such people, examples of peace, of fraternity and love, in our lives.

Gloria, Barcelona, Spain

The shock of his death is still echoing strongly in my heart. He, who never stopped uniting us on a path of communion with so many people, remains present in our lives by that discreet presence that was ever his. He continues to exhort us to travel along this discreet pathway of communion to build up the Kingdom with the conviction that, in that task, we are all necessary and that no one person is worth more than any other.

Marine, Brittany, France

I think one could ponder for hours on the "why" of the deed: why such an act, why such violence, why strike down an apostle of peace? But now finding an answer to that "why" is no longer the main point; Brother Roger has entered the life of Eternity and I pray for him. He left a deep mark on my life and my Christian faith. His work of reconciliation remains an example; the simplicity of life at Taizé remains a major reference in my daily life. Many will talk about his gentleness, his wisdom, but beyond all that I shall keep anchored inside of me his way of looking. When I looked at him, I felt the happiness of those who have made a choice, the happiness of his relationship with God, the happiness of a beautiful, simple community life, the happiness of welcoming and opening wide the gates of Taizé. I am part of the thou-

sands of young people whose lives have been deeply marked by Taizé and Brother Roger; there are no words with which to express my gratitude.

Tahar, a Muslim

I send you my sincere condolences from the depths of my heart. Brother Roger was a righteous man among the righteous and a messenger of peace. That is how I knew him and that is how I will remember him. May the peace and the salvation of God be upon him! Tahar, a Muslim brother.

Chris, USA

Brother Roger lived so much with the Holy Spirit that his language possessed a "Gospel freshness." His words were so basic, so right, so simple and so fruitful. They can live within us like the phrases of the Gospel, for what he said came from God. By his words Brother Roger enlightened my youth and helped me to understand Jesus better and to love his Church. Those words will probably live within me my whole life long.

Jane, UK

As the newspaper noted, there was a tremendous atmosphere of peace, amid the mourning, at the funeral. In conversations with various members of the extended Taizé

family, I have come to feel that the martyrdom of Roger's death has somehow "sharpened" his message: as if we received a short, sharp shock to make sure that we had listened to his life-long prophecy. As a French newspaper headline recorded, the funeral itself gave out, so strongly, a demonstration of forgiveness, in an ecumenical setting that showed "how we Christians love one another".

Elisabete Suzart, a young woman from the neighbourhood where the Taizé brothers live in Alagoinhas, Brazil

I was still a child when the Taizé brothers came to Alagoinhas with their discreet but living and active presence among us, young blacks, whites and mixed-race of all colours, without making any difference between persons or races. We were accepted and always warmly welcomed, and together we prayed and strengthened our faith and our trust in a better life, thus making our Brazil a human place fit to live in. That was the subtle message that we received in the daily life of the Taizé brothers. Brother Roger, always present in that life, communicated to us a message of hope in the unconditional love of the living God for us, a people often without a voice.

Together we relished his teaching: "How good it is to live together as brothers and sisters." Because of this I think that his departure from this earth, even if it remains incomprehensible for me, is the mystery of the love of the crucified and risen Christ which I will remember all the days of my life.

Michele, after the prayer organized in Tuscany on the day of the funeral

There were fifty of us, of all ages, from little children to grandparents: a meeting between generations of persons who had known Taizé and wanted to salute Brother Roger. We were able to live out in a small way what we may have experienced in Taizé by going to the funeral.

The time for personal intentions alternating with the singing of Kyrie lasted more than a quarter of an hour. Many people shared their hopes, their meetings with Brother Roger, their joys and their fatigue. At the end, after an hour and a half of prayer, we also formed a "small group" in which each person told of his personal story with Taizé.

Beautiful, truly beautiful, Lord!

Claudio Vereza, a paralyzed man, today a deputy in Vitoria, Brazil, where the brothers lived from 1972 to 1978

I have just learned of the brutal martyrdom of Brother Roger. It is a feeling of both horror and praise to God for the holy Brother Roger who now is in the glory of the Father. Horror at the indignation of all those who seek justice, truth and life among human beings, and learn about this dramatic, terrible and sorrowful fact.

Praise for the life of this holy Martyr of ecumenism, Brother Roger. He lived through the world war and practiced mercy among brothers. During his life he built the greatest ecumenical experience of all time among us, notably with young people from the entire world! He lived a life beyond all hope, even in his death! He lived to the full contemplation incarnate with and for God's poor, in all the peoples of the earth, in total simplicity

and with the wisdom of the saints of God! Brothers, it is hard to believe this sad news, except through faith in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Father Peter Kanyandago, Uganda

My heartfelt condolences to you all and to the family of Brother Roger. Brother Roger helped me to appreciate the importance of reconciliation and building trust among people. At a time when our country was passing through a very difficult period, he kindled hope in me and helped me to believe that human beings are capable of surmounting problems they create. This inspiration has guided me in my pastoral work and I am most grateful to Brother Roger for this.

Meret, Switzerland

My name is Meret and I am ten and a half years old. Last autumn I spent five days in Taizé during my vacation. My family and I came to the church every evening. I was so enthusiastic about Brother Roger, because he shone so much. With love! But now, when I



heard that he lost his life in such a brutal way, I was very sad.

Children from a school in Berlin, Germany

We regret Brother Roger's death very much. Brother Roger's life work was very important for the community in Taizé and everywhere in the whole world.

Bishop Paul Shishir Sarker, Kushtia Diocese, Church of Bangladesh

Dear Br. Alois,
Greetings from Bangladesh! We are very shocked to know that Br. Roger has passed away. I am lucky and blessed as I met him last year in June at Taizé. Most of the time in history a holy man like Br. Roger died by a violent action.

We condole for his death and pray to our loving Father in heaven that He may grant his soul eternal peace. May God give you comfort and strength in this time of sorrow too.

We thank God for Br. Roger's life and work. He had dedicated his life to bring a spiritual revival for peace and amity among humankind, especially among the youth of this present world. We hope and pray that the Taizé Community will continue its ministry alone the same lines following the path of Br. Roger.

Elisabetta, Italy

I am one of those whose life was changed by Taizé. I thought that that place among the hills of Burgundy was in some sense preserved from evil, but I was wrong. Many times, in moments when I was disheartened, I thought: "The world is obscene, but somewhere there is still Taizé." And instead, evil erupted even there. (...) I pray for him - though I know he is already in the Father's arms - and I pray for his assassin. If our brother could still tell us something, they would be words of compassion. From the depths of his inexhaustible inner peace he would offer a simple word, "Forgive." That is Taizé in a nutshell.

- To find the official messages in their entirety and still other messages, see:
http://www.taize.fr/en_article2522.html
http://www.taize.fr/en_article2672.html

Letter from Taizé

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e-mail: letter@taize.fr www.taize.fr
News from Taizé by email twice a month free of charge: www.taize.fr/taizenews.php

Directeur de publication: A. Trochard,
Edition et impression: Ateliers et Presses de Taizé,
CCPPAP n° 0105K79608 - DL 1018